



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
Melvin Carter, Mayor

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Date: February 8, 2021
To: Heritage Preservation Commission
From: George Gause
Re: Race: Power of Illusion; The House We Live In

"The House We Live In," is the first film about race to focus not on individual attitudes and behavior but on the ways our institutions and policies advantage some groups at the expense of others. Its subject is the "unmarked" race: white people. We see how benefits quietly and often invisibly accrue to white people, not necessarily because of merit or hard work, but because of the racialized nature of our laws, courts, customs, and perhaps most pertinently, housing.

"Colorblind" policies which ignore race only perpetuate these inequities. As Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun wrote, "To get beyond racism we must first take account of race. There is no other way." As The House We Live In shows us, until we address the legacy of past discrimination and confront the historical meanings of race, the dream of equality will remain out of reach.

The commissioners will watch Race: Power of Illusion; The House We Live In (available for free on YouTube) and discuss the documentary at the HPC meeting. Questions that will be discussed:

1. Did the documentary change or challenge any of your assumptions?
2. Did anything in the documentary surprise you?
3. Two weeks from now, what will you remember most and why?
4. How do you feel about the explicit racism of the past?